

**J-KEY INPUT FOR COMPUTER SYSTEMS****Abstract of the Invention**

Information elements such as alphanumeric characters are input into a small computing  
5 device having little or no keyboard by operating with a predetermined number of strokes on a multi-  
directional input key, such as a joystick, input button or pointing button. Each direction of  
movement of the input key provides a input choice for a user allowing the user to make a sequence  
of choices through a hierarchy of selectable information elements. The sequence of strokes in the  
predetermined number of strokes is detected to identify the information element selected. A display  
10 provides information to the user indicating the information elements or characters available and the  
pattern of strokes to select a particular character. In some implementations of the invention the  
entire key stroke pattern is displayed. In other implementations of the invention, the display provides  
guidance before each stroke to indicate the key stroke choices available to select subsets of the  
information elements.